

Message Text

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ORIGIN SNM-05

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L/OES:MHOINKES
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SNAR, EEWT, VE

SUBJECT: U.S. COAST GUARD SEIZURES OF VENEZUELAN
REGISTERED VESSEL

REF: CARACAS 3262

1. PRESENT CABLE CONSTITUTES AN INTERIM REPLY TO REFTTEL.
QUESTIONS AND PROPOSALS RELATED TO SEIZURES OF VESSELS ON
HIGH SEAS WILL BE ADDRESSED MORE FULLY IN LATER CABLE TO
THOSE POSTS WHOSE HOST REGISTERED VESSELS HAVE BEEN FOUND
TO HAVE ENGAGED IN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING. THAT MESSAGE
WILL ALSO OUTLINE PROPOSALS FOR ARRIVING AT UNDERSTANDINGS
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OR AGREEMENTS AIMED AT RESOLVING PROBLEMS CREATED BY AD
HOC REQUESTS RE HIGH SEAS SEIZURES. SUCH UNDERSTANDINGS
MIGHT INCLUDE MEASURES FOR DEALING WITH PARTICULAR PROB-
LEMS SUCH AS REPATRIATION OF CREWS AND VESSEL STORAGE
CHARGES.

2. THE BASIC PURPOSE OF SEIZING VESSELS IS TO REMOVE THEM

AND THEIR NARCOTIC CARGOES FROM TRAFFIC AND TO INCREASE THE RISKS AND COST TO THE TRAFFICKERS. WHEN A VIOLATION OF U.S. LAW IS FOUND, IT IS NORMALLY OUR INTENTION TO PROSECUTE. WHEN, BY AGREEMENT OF FOREIGN GOVERNMENT, A SHIP IS SEIZED BY USCG ON BEHALF OF THAT GOVERNMENT, IT IS EXPECTED

THAT IT WILL PROSECUTE UNDER ITS LAW, IF EVIDENCE WARRANTS. WE BELIEVE THAT DISCUSSION AND, HOPEFULLY, AGREEMENT ON THE HANDLING OF NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING VESSELS IS THE KIND OF COOPERATIVE ACTION APPROPRIATELY UNDERTAKEN PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 35 OF THE SINGLE CONVENTION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS (1961). IN ADDITION, PARTICULARLY FOR THE PUBLIC RELATIONS SIDE, IN OPENING DISCUSSION ON THIS MATTER SOME REFERENCE MIGHT BE MADE TO THE MARCH 28 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH VENEZUELA TO EMPHASIZE THE NEW COMMITMENT TO BILATERAL COOPERATION IN THIS NARCOTIC ACTIVITY. IN FACT, THE MIXED COMMISSION ESTABLISHED BY THAT AGREEMENT MIGHT PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR FUTURE DISCUSSIONS OF THE PROBLEM. VANCE

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